







## Extracts.

Two ROBBERS.  
When Death from some fair face  
Is stealing life away,  
All weep, save she, the grace  
That earth shall lose to-day.  
When Time from some fair face  
Steals beauty year by year,  
For she alone fading grace  
Who else save she, a tear?  
And Death not often cares  
To wake the World's distress;  
While Time, the cunning, mars  
Surely all's loveliness.  
Yet though by breath and breath  
Fades all our fairest prime,  
Men shrink from cruel Death,  
But honour crafty Time.

P. W. B.

## THE SHADOW OF THE KNIFE.

BY BILL BRAVE  
"Dull work this," observed a youngster, as he sat on his chest with his heart bent forward and buried in his hands, while the rest of us, lounged about the gunroom with the listlessness peculiar to youth when missing the wretched stimulus of active employment.

"Dull enough," replied another, with a yawn, which set several of his muscles initiating his example.

"And yet I have seen some stirring work hereabouts," observed a third—a fine young fellow, who had not long passed for lieutenant, and was awaiting the promotion which, it was well known would be his with the next despatch from the flagship of the station.

"Ah! when was that?" asked the first speaker, exhibiting an amount of interest quite wonderful under the circumstances—for the mouth of an African river in the middle of the day is not a place in which to get up much enthusiasm.

"Tell us all about it," said another.

"Oh, do, please," pleaded a small specimen, whose cheeks had hardly yet lost the freshness of his native Somerseshire, or received the tanning of a tropical sun.

"It's not much to tell," continued the other, "but such as it is, it nearly cost my life, so you may guess it was of some consequence to me at the time."

The rest now joined their voices to that of the youngster, and never ceased until Master consented to gratify their curiosity.

"I was in the old *Wasp*, sloop-of-war, at the time, now some two years ago, and had already been employed twice in taking the prizes we had made among the slaves into St. Helena." I had not long returned to the old brig, and we were cruising sleepily along the Gold Coast on the look-out for any of the dealers in black ivory that might fall into our clutches, when one evening, just before sunset, we made out a suspicious-looking vessel in the offing steering off from the land as though she had run out of one of the rivers and was standing away to sea.

"We were under easy sail at the time, and immediately cracked on everything we could carry, and bore up after the strange sail, hoping to overhaul her before dark, so as to make out her character; for she was a long way to leeward of us when first reported, and we had little doubt of her being a slave with a cargo on board, trying to get clear off the coast and elude our cruisers.

"There was a fine breeze blowing, and the old *Wasp* rolled along in good style, doing her 'ton and a half' easy, so that soon after the sun touched the horizon we could make out the rig of the chase, which had seen us, and was casting on all she could make drive to get away.

"She was apparently a fine little schooner of some one hundred tons or so, with very taut masts and large spread of canvas. As the sun set we could just make out her long main boom, tipping up and down as she rolled and fell over the swell, and when the full moon got up, it showed her by its pale light still staggering along, hopelessly endeavouring to escape the sloop-of-war which was each moment drawing up to her.

"We had been uncommonly lucky, and the capture of several prizes lately had put us in high spirits. So we laughed and chatted as we watched how the sloop overhauled the little schooner, and speculated on our chances of finding a cargo on board, or other evidence wherewith to condemn her.

"The moon served us well that night, and showed us the rakish little vessel pounding on like grim death as she off. Once or twice she altered her course a point or two, as though to test our alertness, but the *Wasp* was in good hands, and before midnight we were near enough to try a shot at her.

"She took no notice of the first, which was purposely aimed wide, but when the second went whistling through her big main sail, they apparently thought the game was played out, for she suddenly hauled her wind and let fly.

"In an incredibly short space of time we were up with her, and then, heaving-to, a boat was lowered and sent alongside, when it soon became manifest she was taken red-handed, for her hold was crowded with over two hundred wretched slaves, and there could be no doubt of the nature of her employment. She was accordingly taken, possession of, and a prize crew put on board.

"They say 't never rains but it pours.' However that may be, I know not, but sure enough next morning we took another schooner, also full of slaves; and for some reason—I know not what—our skipper shifted over the prisoners, from one to the other, and that same day I had orders to go on board the first we had taken, and with six hands for prize crew to take her into St. Helena.

"She was a beautiful model, with rather full bows above board, but tapering off under water like a tablespoon with a cutwater down the middle of it. Her after-liner was very fine, and her masts and spread of canvas were a sight to wonder at. She had a made-up cabin built into the deck, and rising some two or three feet above it with sliding ports along on each side, for ventilation. Round this there was a gangway left just in case you may have seen in some of the Dutch ports, the rivers. For on this she had made some enterprising Yankees, and the other schooner being under Spanish colours, and hailing from Cuba, our skipper's plan of shifting over the crew had left the *Wasp* with the lot of fourteen Spanish Creoles, who, together with the slaves, my prize crew of ten, and myself, were to keep in, in case of any sudden intercurrence we dropped our anchor in St. Helena roads.

"It was soon on board, and having received all necessary instructions, made sail on the schooner, and was quickly out of sight of the *Wasp*, bowing along before a fair wind, and steering a straight course for St. Helena.

"There was a large berth for the mate below the main cabin, and here I put myself, determined to keep them all together, and the Spaniards forward. As we had no orders to treat the prisoners very strictly, I allowed the Spanish captain all, and gave him one of the four standing berths which lined the cabin. He professed to be greatly obliged, but I noticed that although he used the bunk as a depository for his clothes, he did not turn in there to sleep.

"That day and the following night, we made good progress, and all bid fair for a quick run. At eight o'clock on the second evening the old quartermaster, who acted as my only mate, had got the watch, and I stood beside him at the companion, from whence I could see down the short ladder and into the main cabin as far as the table, which occupied the centre. It had been dark about an hour, and an oil lamp threw a strong glare round the place. I had only just come on deck, and had left the cabin tempestuously a moment before I started; therefore

when by the lamp light below I saw the reflection of a man's figure upon the floor and locker on the starboard side.

"I was about to run down the ladder to ascertain who it was, when the shadow moved in the direction of the Spaniard's berth, and I instantly recollected the captain of the Spanish slaver, and had no doubt it was he.

"Still some feeling stronger than mere curiosity—some sense which Providence occasionally sends to warn us against the secret designs of our enemies—prompted me to observe him further.

"Slowly the shadow crossed the cabin, and after a brief interval, during which it remained immovable, the right arm was raised, and thrust among the loose effects which the man had put in the bunk.

"There was nothing very remarkable in all this, and I was just about turning away, supposing he was setting the bunk to rights previous to turning in for the night, when the lamp suddenly brightening up, threw a strong shadow upon the cabin floor. It was the same hand and arm which was now reflected distinctly upon the white planks, but the other had joined it, and while the left held the sheath, the right hand grasped a long Spanish knife, the tip of the blade resting upon the thumb of the left hand, as if to try its point.

"The next moment there was another movement: the blade was brought high, and announced his identity under the name of Mirza Khan.

"Dumas, an individual with a bronzed face and black moustaches, very long and very shiny, knocked at Alexandre Dumas' door, and was awaiting the promotion which, it was well known would be his with the next despatch from the flagship of the station.

"'Ab! when was that?' asked the first speaker, exhibiting an amount of interest quite wonderful under the circumstances—for the mouth of an African river in the middle of the day is not a place in which to get up much enthusiasm.

"There's something up, depend upon it,' he whispered. 'What else should we want the knife for?' The something up meant neither more nor less than murder, and a raking of the vessel, was my own conviction, and I stated my opinion to my second in command.

"I'll sail on the same course myself,' replied Headfort, with a slow shake of the head. 'I'm thinking that ill-looking waggonee of a Spaniard did never get and unloosed his knife for nothing, and this evening you will see him.' The stranger was punctual. He dined and dined well.

"I turned towards old Headfort, and our eyes met. A glance showed me he had seen all.

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